

SOCIAL STUDIES > U.S. HISTORY > GREAT DEPRESSION

DEFINE

explain the terms below in your own words

BREAD LINES:

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SIT-DOWN STRIKES:

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HOBOS:

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DUST BOWL:

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THE GRAPES OF WRATH:

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LOUIS ARMSTRONG:

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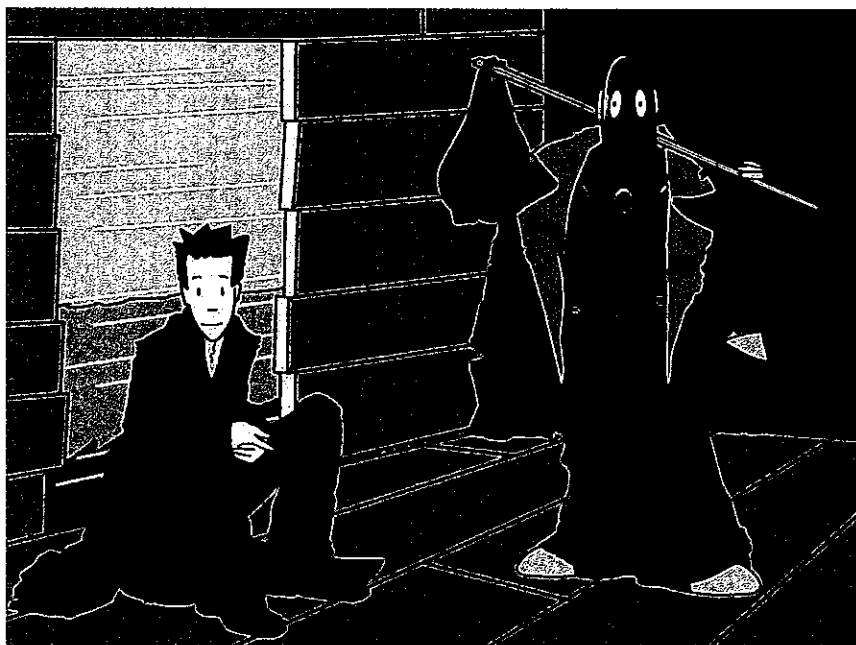
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Choose an additional term from the movie to define.

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WAY BACK WHEN



People have been living as **hoboes** ever since the 1870s, when the transcontinental railroad was completed. Hoboes are people who travel from place to place, usually without a permanent home or a means of income.

The numbers of hoboes in America swelled to an all-time high during the 1930s, when unemployment forced hundreds of thousands of men (along with several thousand women and children) to travel from town to town in search of work. These hoboes formed their own subculture, which included a unique vocabulary, an informal code

of conduct, and even hobo music, art, and literature.

Hoboes rarely identified themselves by their real names; instead, they went by colorful nicknames, like "Boxcar Bob" or "Weary Willie." Hobo camps were called "jungles;" bedrolls were called "bindles," and traveling thieves were called "yeggs."

Often, hoboes passing through a town carved or wrote secret symbols on signposts to alert other hoboes about what they could find there. A square with the top part missing meant it was safe to camp in the area; a circle with two arrows in it meant "get out of town, hoboes not welcome here;" and two shovels meant that work was available.

Many hoboes carried around harmonicas or guitars and created some pretty memorable tunes. "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" is one of the best-known. Today, the hobo lifestyle is more or less gone, since most goods are transported across the country in trucks, not trains—but the hobo legend remains. Every August, the town of Britt, Iowa hosts the National Hobo Convention, where rail-riders from across the country can gather and celebrate.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

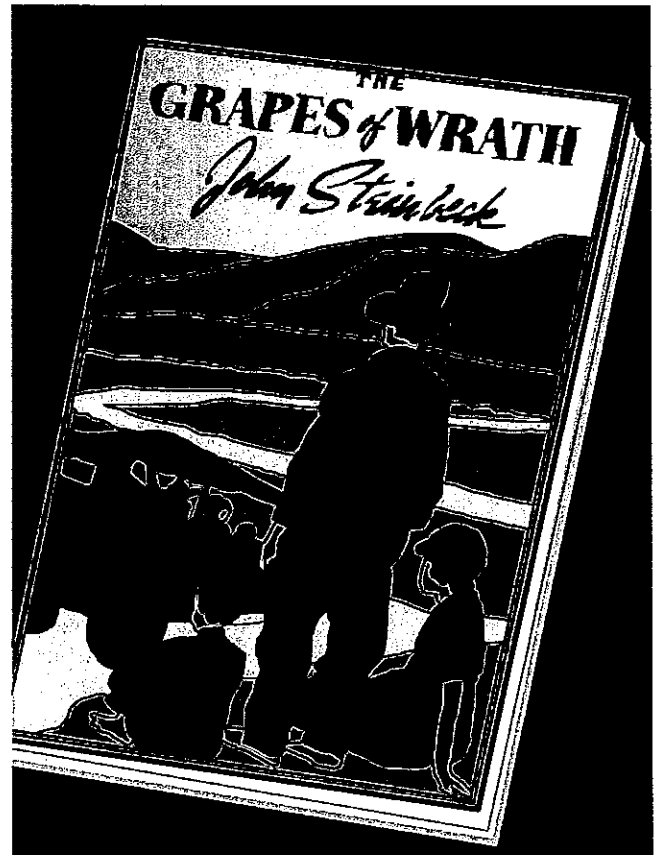
Probably the most famous work of literature to emerge from the Great Depression is *The Grapes of Wrath*, the 1939 novel by American author John Steinbeck.

The book tells the story of the Joads, a family of Oklahoma farmers who lose their farm when the Dust Bowl destroys their crops. Like thousands of other poor farm families from the Great Plains, they pack all their belongings in a rundown truck and head to California looking for work.

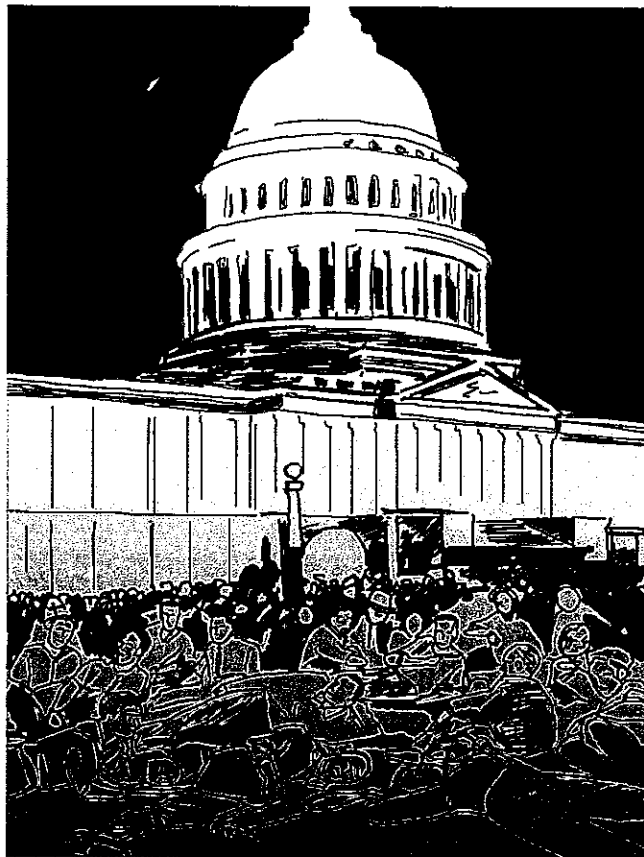
But California isn't what they hoped it would be. There are thousands of applicants for every available job, and the businessmen who run the farms give their workers no rights and pay them impossibly small wages. The Joads are forced to live in a dirty, miserable squatters' camp and are confronted with anti-union violence when they and others attempt to establish fair working conditions.

When the novel was released, it was an instant phenomenon; it was read, discussed, and argued over throughout the world. Many critics called Steinbeck a Communist for believing that workers could only gain their rights by banding together and finding communal solutions to their problems. Nevertheless, the book is still read in high schools across America, and it was prominently cited when Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962.

The Grapes of Wrath was also made into an Academy Award-winning film in 1940; currently, the movie ranks seventh on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest films of the 20th century.



DID YOU KNOW?



In 1924, the government passed the **Adjusted Service Certificate Law**, which gave all World War I veterans "bonus certificates" good for \$1 for each day they'd served in the U.S. during the conflict, and \$1.25 for each day they'd served overseas. Like savings bonds, the certificates would "mature" and could be redeemed 20 years after they were issued.

But by 1932, many veterans were out of work and wanted their money immediately. In the spring of that year, between 15,000 and 20,000 veterans marched on Washington, D.C. to demand their money. They were nicknamed the **Bonus Army**, and they camped out in an enormous shantytown (nicknamed "Hooverville" after President Herbert Hoover) across the Anacostia River from central Washington.

When the Senate voted against paying the bonus, protest leader Walter W. Waters announced that the Bonus Army would remain in Washington and protest in front of the Capitol every day. On July 28, after a month of protests, the Attorney General

announced that the Bonus Army would be forcefully evacuated from government property.

When the D.C. police couldn't do the job, Hoover called out the Army. Led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Army routed the protestors with bayonets and tear gas, and burned their camp down.

After Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, the Bonus Army came back to ask him for their money. He didn't give it to them, but he treated them respectfully and helped many of them get jobs on government-sponsored public works projects. In the end, the veterans wound up getting their bonuses in 1936.

FAMOUS FACES

During the Great Depression, life could often seem hopeless. Interestingly enough, a source of hope to many Americans was First Lady **Eleanor Roosevelt**.

Even before the Depression, she'd been a passionate advocate on behalf of child labor laws, a fair minimum wage, and workers' rights. But after the Depression began in earnest, she became a figure of hope during a time when optimism was hard to come by.

Since her husband's physical handicap made travel difficult, Mrs. Roosevelt became his "eyes and ears," traveling the country and listening to people's problems on the President's behalf. She held press conferences and wrote a daily newspaper column to keep the public up-to-date on what was going on in the White House.

In addition, Roosevelt was a champion of civil rights for African Americans, and she founded the National Youth Administration, which gave young people part-time work. She also investigated unfair working conditions and fought for unions' right to organize.

As a result, Mrs. Roosevelt became a beloved figure in Depression-era America. Thousands of people wrote her letters every day, and she'd often send replies. Even after FDR died and she was no longer first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt remained a prominent figure, playing a central role in the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, and serving in the American delegation to the UN until 1953.

